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State Socialism, Egalitarianism, Collectivism: On the Social Context of Socialist Work Movements in Czechoslovak Industrial and Mining Enterprises, 1945–1965

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Abstract

This article examines the social history of socialist work movements in Czechoslovakia during the first two decades of the Communist regime in the country. These movements were attempts to increase industrial productivity and to transform preexisting working-class culture. Not only did they founder on the chaotic operation of the bureaucratic planned economy and the endemic shortages it brought in train, they also foundered on the realities of labor relations in Czechoslovak enterprises. These were marked by the continuity of tensions inherited from the immediate postwar years that persisted into the Communist era, and the strength of egalitarian values among Czechoslovakia's working class.

This article¹ deals with the social relations that were embedded in socialist work movements. These movements failed as a result of these social relations; a fact which must lead one to be sceptical as to whether the category of the social under state socialism can simply be reduced to a dependent variable of political power. The focus on social relations is not to be understood, as research on Communist Czechoslovakia so often does, as a history characterized by the actions of the state on the one hand, and the often oppositional reactions of those who were simply acted upon. Cooperation with the political system could coexist with actions that could be described as deviant, just as accommodation and the pursuit of individual interests could reinforce conformity. Patterns of behavior that were unambiguous were only found occasionally.

A Political Sketch of Socialist Work Movements

The introduction of the Soviet model of socialist industrialization to Czechoslovakia following the Communist seizure of power in February 1948 did not merely imply the transformation of the structures of the economy and of society.² It also drove the introduction of a series of nonmarket controls over the labor process which were copied from those introduced during the industrialization drives in the Soviet Union. These were the Stakhanovite movement, "shock-work," and socialist labor competition campaigns organized across the whole territory of the state on a regional or local basis as well as within and between enterprises, departments, workshops, or groups of employees. They also con-

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sisted of work brigades, individually determined work targets, and the promotion of specific individuals as “heroes of labor.” They were characterized by regime-driven campaigns of mobilization to increase the intensity of work, of which a prominent example was the so-called “Stalin shift” in December 1949, organized on a “shock-work” basis to celebrate the seventieth birthday of the Marshall, in which sixty percent of industrial workers in Bohemia alone participated.³

The Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) and the Central Council of Trade Unions defined the political character of these movements. The workers could prove their “socialist maturity” through participation in shock-work and demonstrate their “moral, political, and ideological consent.”⁴ At the same time in late 1949 one department head in the National Planning Office wrote that the massively increased extent of shock-work reflected the conviction of the workers that “they are prepared to live in a more socially just political system and that they want the possibility to create for themselves, their families, and the whole of society a veritable paradise on earth through increasing the intensity of their labor. In this society there will be no gain without work and no one will profit by more than they have contributed.”⁵

The first steps on the road towards this goal were taken between 1945 and 1948. Because issues of the intensification of labor and the political meanings ascribed to work form an important sphere of conflict prior to 1948, as well as constituted a series of conflicts that were inherited by Czechoslovak state socialism, consideration of this period makes possible a greater understanding of what was to occur afterwards.

Work and Politics in the Postwar Republic

The origins of attempts to increase industrial productivity that came with the beginnings of economic reconstruction were influenced as much by national motives as well as a politically ambiguous enthusiasm for a new beginning, as they were by socialist, or Soviet models. Mining engineers proclaimed the beginning of the Stakhanovite movement in the Ostrava-Karviná coal fields as early as May 8, 1945, while over the following months Stakhanovites emerged like “green shoots” from the ground.⁶ In this coal field in autumn 1945 Stakhanov’s own record from 1935 was clearly broken.⁷ The roots of socialist labor competition could be found long before 1948, in Presidential Decree No. 89 of October 1945 which called into existence the national labor competition, the first campaign of industrial mobilization in the interests of the reconstruction program of the National Front in which more than 50,000 enterprises participated. There were campaigns in individual sectors, like the competition in heavy engineering that was unveiled on August 1, 1947, the production committees for the intensification of labor which began in later summer 1945, the precursors of shock-work such as brigades in the coal mines or collecting the harvest and, finally, the campaign spearheaded by the KSČ entitled “thirty million working hours for the Republic” in January 1948.⁸ These are just some randomly selected examples that

demonstrate a phenomenon supported not only by the KSČ and the trade unions, but one that was also supported by the noncommunist parties. Their goal was the speediest possible economic and social consolidation of the Republic, underpinned by both the postwar radicalism of industrial workers and the policies of the Communists and their associated trade union federation. Czechoslovakia was the only state in East-Central Europe that managed to rebuild its economy to its prewar strength—that of 1937—within three years of the end of the war.⁹ Industry was speedily and comprehensively nationalized in October 1945; a monopoly trade-union federation under Communist leadership was founded in May 1945, which organized Soviet-style factory councils in enterprises and organized labor competition; state direction of labor was introduced and a planned economy was constructed gradually from 1946. These transformations were underwritten by the enormous influence of the KSČ among all social groups.

The working class was the primary social base for this transformation, despite its real cross-class support. In 1946 a representative survey reported that more than a third of employees had already willingly participated at least once in a work brigade, while almost forty-eight percent of surveyed brigade members were manual workers.¹⁰ The reality that lay behind these raw figures is, however, worthy of more detailed examination. From 1946 onwards, brigades that existed for long periods were made up of “one and the same people.” New brigade members tended to be isolated within them, according to the economic commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions, reporting in August 1948 on its attempts to recruit “new” workers to them.¹¹ In late 1947 the enterprises began to lay off members of the older brigades, questioning their attitude to work and political consciousness, and replacing them with “convicts and prisoners-of-war” because they were “cheaper” and could stay longer.¹² In the mines brigade members were blamed for “arguments, drunkenness, and thoughtless visits to women of ill-repute.”¹³ After the parliamentary election in May 1946 the morale of workers crumbled. The factory council of the Bohemian-Moravian Machine Building Company in early June 1946 recommended work with the mining brigades “in order to maintain their morale.”¹⁴

In the same year the state began to implement its new wage policy, which removed the egalitarian wage measures introduced immediately after the end of the war by the factory councils, replacing them with wages related to performance underpinned by new work targets, or norms. These measures resulted in a strike wave in the Kladno steel works, the Škoda plant in Plzeň, in Hostivař, in a whole series of Prague machine factories, and in Ostrava’s chemical plants.¹⁵ The Vehicle Manufacture Division of the Škoda plant sent a delegation to Brno in order to incite a solidarity strike with the workers of the armaments plant in the city.¹⁶

The consequences of impoverishment created by the National Socialist war economy and the poor provision of food in the postwar years provide the clearest explanation of the resistance to drives to increase productivity,¹⁷ even when the party and trade unions justified these through invoking the need for sacrifice

in the interests of reconstruction.¹⁸ “They want it to be just like it was before,” argued the mineworker Šesták at a production meeting in Roosevelt Mine in Ervěnice in November 1947, “where our supervisors watch over our every move, so that we don’t stroll around as much as we do now.”¹⁹ In Prague’s machine manufacturing factories the “wage calculators” were given short shrift by the workers,²⁰ others were regarded by the workers with distrust. The norm-setters were “bad people whose existence was based on the exploitation of the workers,” and the time-and-motion men were “spies,” at least according to a description of the climate of opinion in the factories prepared by the Prague Institute for Work Norms in 1946.²¹ Trade union functionaries who attempted to measure the time taken to do certain jobs were insulted and mocked.²²

This discontent was in part the product of the climate of broken hopes and disappointment that was generated by the collapse of the factory council movement.²³ The factory councils took over the enterprises directly and managed them after the end of the war—a role which the trade unions would later appropriate for themselves.²⁴ They based themselves on the interests of the industrial workers at the beginning of the “new era.”²⁵ Their primary goals were to realize radical democracy at the level of the enterprise with equal opportunities for workers and managers to participate in decisionmaking as well as a “just distribution of wealth.” This meant in the first place the introduction of rigidly egalitarian wage and social policies.²⁶ The early factory councils stemmed from the radical traditions of the prewar First Republic, syndicalist and cooperative traditions, as well as the ideology of a “socialism for ordinary people” based on the idea of an economy founded on exchange between workers and small-scale producers.²⁷ These radical traditions coexisted with considerable support for the KSC, which many workers saw as the guarantor of a future based on social emancipation and justice.²⁸

The attempts of the factory councils to carve out independent roles foundered on the opposition of a united front of the KSC, the united, monopoly trade unions, and the Social Democrats, backed on this occasion by the bourgeois parties. Presidential Decree 104 of October 10, 1945 regulating the factory councils restricted their participation to “production” matters, in which they were to act as the subordinates of the monopoly trade union, and which enshrined the principle of one-man management in the enterprises.²⁹ Despite this the actual powers of the factory councils in the enterprise were not seriously restricted, though they were forced to give up their political vision of future social change, which had demotivating consequences.³⁰ The decree did not succeed in wresting control of the labor process, or payments-by-result and wages policy from the councils immediately. Despite the willingness of the factory councils to negotiate wages and conditions,³¹ these would, however be dictated eventually from above.³² Worker representatives from the armaments plant in Brno who went to join trade union functionaries to meet with management in order to negotiate national wage levels in December 1945 were sent back by the unions with the reason that the room where the negotiations would take place was too small for them.³³ In southern Moravia in autumn 1947, in the face of considerable

protest from miners, new norms produced without the participation of the factory councils were simply dictated from above.³⁴

For a long time prior to 1948 the model of organization of the trade unions did not recognize any intermediate forms of interest representation; within the monopoly trade unions the “interests” of the working class were subordinated to politics and to the “peoples’ democratic” order.³⁵ They foundered on the regulation of the labor process and remuneration at the shop-floor level, where bureaucratic regulations governing production could not be implemented. Contrary to the Stalinist intentions of the regime, local practices which predated the Communist seizure of power soon gained the upper hand. This could be seen in the widespread informal arrangements over “black wage-payments,” norm relaxations that were often forced on the norm-setters, and the presence of subventions to wage funds that formed a regular line in the budgets of factory councils.³⁶ A detailed analysis of these informal relationships, often frequently dismissed in research on state socialism as corruption pure and simple,³⁷ is not possible given the lack of research on Czechoslovakia. Their background was undoubtedly the relative labor shortage that existed at this time.³⁸ They were justified by the widespread shortages of centrally distributed foodstuffs and goods supplied at official prices, while black-market prices could not be paid by most workers. Workers were not prepared to work for “administratively determined wages,” when “everyone participates in the black market,” as Slovak carpenters and bricklayers put it just before February 1948.³⁹

As far as high-level union functionaries were concerned, in 1946 falling motivation in the workplace showed that workers did not understand the character of the age.⁴⁰ Miners in the Moravian town of Přívoz believed that they were treated much as before, and consequently described their union bosses as “a new bourgeoisie.”⁴¹ Official organs of interest representation and other central bodies represented for the workers the “profiteers,” who followed older laws of “class exploitation,” according to one Prague factory director in January 1948.⁴²

This conflict was not merely about workers investing less in work, but about the way in which work was embedded in society and culture, which generated notions that collided with the “productivist” ethic of the state. In 1946 participation in labor competition in Moravian mines was consciously avoided. The members of shock-work brigades were continually reshuffled to allow old and ill workers to participate out of a sense of collegiality. The work performance of groups thus absorbed weaker individual production performances.⁴³ In 1949, the second year of the first five-year plan, the management of the Czechoslovak chemical enterprises warned that labor competition was being blown off-course by the physical strains it was placing on workers,⁴⁴ a phenomenon which was leading to the development of both sharp differentiation and conflict in the mines between those who were strong and those who were weak.⁴⁵ The tensions it caused led to the creation of so-called “social workshops” inside the enterprises in summer 1948, in which the sick and the disabled were given appropriate work.⁴⁶ Such measures, however, fell by the wayside from the beginning of the 1950s.

Work Movements and the "Forced" Construction of Socialism

After its seizure of power the leadership of the KSČ posed the question of how broadly Soviet work methods had been adopted in Czechoslovak industry. In terms of both technological development and the rationalization of labor organization, Czechoslovak industry was considerably more "advanced" than Soviet industry had been in 1935 and 1936, when Stakhanovism had emerged. Despite the speedy reconstruction the low industrial productivity of the immediate postwar years seemed to provide a compelling argument for the widespread introduction of socialist work-movements.⁴⁷ The political pressure that drove their spread grew as a result of the knowledge that the "motivation threshold," which had emerged in 1946, was itself a product of political factors, and could not be reduced to an issue of material incentives. The pressure of political mobilization increased when the intensification of the Cold War drove the expansion of the armaments industry and dramatically raised plan targets in 1951.⁴⁸

Workplace resistance was framed by the slogans of the era; as the Prague worker Horová, a member of the KSČ since 1935, wrote to the Social Policy Commission of the Central Commission of the Trade Unions in June 1948: "Work, work, without a pause for breath, thoughtlessly, just work." She continued: "work in the workshops and the offices, in the brigades for political organization, in the brigades of the trades' unions, the brigade for everything, in the brigade for holidays—work. I ask you comrades, let there be no doubt, make no mistake! We want to work, but we also want the peace we have earned."⁴⁹ A group of workers in Škoda attempted to deflect the new offensive: "All of us have joined the labor competition, because we work according to payment-by-results."⁵⁰ In a chemical factory at Kaznějov in western Bohemia the workers refused to make pledges in the new competition campaign, for "the plans and individual performances that are necessary to meet targets will just be raised from above, and the competition will be launched again."⁵¹ In early 1953 in the No. 5 furnace at the Vítkovice Metal Works, the steelworkers simply refused to join work movements with the blunt rejoinder: "don't come near us any more with competitions."⁵²

On the other hand, "you slave away like madmen and we don't know where we can put the produce," complained warehouse workers in the Teplice-Šanov artificial flower factory to their colleagues in production.⁵³ The district trade union council in Ústí nad Labem reported to Prague in November 1949 that "a really dangerous rivalry" dominated the climate among shock-workers.⁵⁴ In the factories record after record for production fulfillment was broken during 1948 and 1949. The machine miller Fialka fulfilled his production norm by over 800 percent in the presence of the district party secretary during a shock-work shift. The metal grinder Šebestová achieved fifth place in a competition in the precision machinery factory in Brno by producing four times the norm.⁵⁵ Working on a chain stitching machine the shock-worker Koucká met 171 percent of his production target.⁵⁶ The face worker Žurkovský, the best worker in the iron ore mines around the Slovakian town of Rudňany, managed to achieve a stable av-

erage of 160 percent of his norm during the first nine months of 1950.⁵⁷ A thirteen-member shock-worker brigade in the Bohumín Iron Works reduced the time for the repair of the Martin blast furnace by one third.⁵⁸

Such reports will have a familiar ring given the parallels during the “foundation years” between all of the peoples’ democracies; it is necessary, however, to draw attention to the broad spectrum that existed between the rejection of such campaigns and conformity. The actual implementation of work movements, which was primarily the responsibility of the trade unions, fluctuated between rigid drives for progress and a more cautious reticence. In the Ervěnice power plant one competition foundered, only because of the damage caused to a turbine, rather than the reservations of engineers.⁵⁹ Trade-union functionaries in Gottwaldov-Zlín organized competition in the face of opposition. They spoke in secret over a period of years to a small number of workers, who used the factory council to organize competition based on the Soviet example from January 1953: “there is still a shortage of competitions, and even then, many of them are secret. It is necessary to ensure that socialist competition becomes a public institution in the whole of the enterprise.”⁶⁰

It is hardly possible to estimate the extent to which resistance to socialist work movements stemmed from or fed skeptical judgments of the socialist political system. Work movement did, however, strengthen the impression that in production socialism represented little more than old wine in new bottles. When the “multi-machine movement” was introduced into the textile industry in 1949, it led to each worker having to work a greater number of machines simultaneously. The measure foundered on “considerable difficulties,” according to a report of the leadership of the textile workers’ union written in June 1950. This was “because the workers and their representatives had fought against this system during the period of private-capitalist production, as it had meant profiteering and unemployment. It was necessary to explain this problem from the standpoint of socialist production and to justify it politically, in order to overcome the old thinking of the workers.”⁶¹ It seems at best highly doubtful that the use of emancipatory rhetoric by propagandists seeking to justify the intensification of labor under socialism, met with much enthusiasm from the workforce. Trade union functionaries themselves had their own reservations on this point even prior to the Communist seizure of power. When two members of the district union organization in the town of Benešov visited the Bat’a Factory in Zlín in September 1947, they could not but notice the frenzy produced by the considerably Taylorized labor process in the Moravian shoe plant. In view of the emphasis of the “new era” being created they did not want to console themselves with the thought that the speed of the conveyors would be automatically reduced in comparison to that in force during the prewar, capitalist Republic, so that workers could pause for breath. The situation of the workers, according to the report, was the same as it always had been, as “to a greater or lesser extent they worked like slaves.”⁶² From the end of October 1951 the first signs emerged that the workers and their doubts about competition could no longer be ignored by the authorities. Increasingly the KSČ justified its measures not with reference to

social emancipation, but by addressing directly the issue of the cost of living. Yet although they explained that with an increase in productivity the prices of goods would fall, many workers felt that precisely the opposite had been the case. Consequently in one tumultuous production meeting in the Strakonice armaments factory at the end of October 1951 party and trade union functionaries were shouted down.⁶³

Socialist Competition and Secondary Relations of Power

Assumptions of effective totalitarian control do not go very far in helping us to explain the implementation of the political program of socialist industrialization nor its cultural counterpart, the celebration of productive labor. When one uncovers the maneuvering room of actors within and outside enterprises, it becomes clear that constraints and conflicts imposed by the complex environment within which enterprises operated—that of a planning apparatus, an economic bureaucracy, the party and the unions—were resolved at enterprise level through informal bargaining strategies. Czechoslovak enterprises were overwhelmed by around 77,000 different laws, government directives, central committee decisions, guidelines, and resolutions between 1948 and 1956.⁶⁴ These could not all be implemented point-by-point, and their quantity imposed a pressure to select the most important. This interacted with the concrete situations of the enterprises, and the actual conditions and difficulties that they faced. They found themselves in conflict with senior figures in the government, who appeared in the enterprises to insist on the implementation of party and government directives.⁶⁵ The director of the United Kladno Steelworks explained to trade union functionaries why socialist competition was in a poor state in his enterprise in early 1953. The delivery of raw materials was “irregular,” the order books were not full for every department, and finally a decision over authorizing some kinds of production had not been made.⁶⁶ Such reasons were not merely given in confidential conversations. One delegate to a union conference in December 1952 stated openly that the pledge of his enterprise in the commemorative competition for the thirty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution would come to nothing, because only eight percent of the necessary raw materials had been delivered.⁶⁷ Workers could be similarly vocal; in Kladno in March 1949 there was no gas for the rollers, leading to protest.⁶⁸ Workers at the Škoda plant in February 1957 stated that they would only be prepared to participate in a competition if their materials arrived.⁶⁹ In one Slovak supply enterprise producing components for the motor industry where the delivery of materials ground to a halt in October 1955, they complained that “one of the others has taken our work.”⁷⁰

The practice of ignoring the decisions of the higher party and trade-union organs at the enterprise level, which formed part of a more general tendency towards minimizing plan obligations, was an example of conduct towards the political authorities which cannot in any way be characterized as that of a “command economy.” In July 1962 the South Moravian district committee of the KSČ im-

posed a norm of 1.8 orders to be met in each shift on enterprises—something to be increased as the KSČ congress to be held in December that year approached. Management in several machine factories protested that this was “unrealistic,” while in Kuřim it was corrected downwards to 1.55 orders per shift. When separate workshops in this factory reviewed the “possibilities” the target was further reduced to 1.45.⁷¹

Faltering deliveries of raw materials had already marred industrial production in the 1950s,⁷² and were frequently used by enterprises as an excuse.⁷³ Although sanctions were imposed, the circumstances in which they would be lifted were foreseeable.⁷⁴ In these circumstances the operation of the economy did not merely have a role that was subversive of socialist competition. Instead it was shaped by an unspoken agreement with the economic administration, in which the authorities accepted that the declared goals of socialist competition were one thing, while its reality was quite another. The administration of the Ministry for Steel Production and Iron Ore Mining, responsible for the organization and supervision of the Red Flag competition in 1953, was satisfied with whatever report came from the enterprises: “If an enterprise sends in a good report, that is good, but if they send in a bad one, that is good also.”⁷⁵ Many of reports, whose authors had full knowledge of this attitude, were composed with almost complete indifference.

The hierarchical relations of instruction—the party-leadership-initiated Red Flag competition—paralyzed the individual initiatives of the bureaucracy. This was made clear by the relations that shaped the implementation of the regulation of enterprise premiums, whose supervision by the ministries—which argued that this task had been assigned to them by “higher organs”—was practically nonexistent.⁷⁶ These shaped the realistic extent of production, which casts the informal interaction between the Ministry for Steel Production and its clients in a new light. One should not “be remotely surprised” at poor plan fulfilment, reassured an emissary of the ministry to the Kladno Steel Works in April 1953, because scrap was scarce. On the other hand there were a series of party and government decisions that exhorted the steel works to fulfil their plans and workers vowed in the party’s daily paper *Rudé Právo*, to instil “a spirit of struggle to ensure the fulfilment of the plan in the furnaces.”⁷⁷

The opening of the possibility for “elastic” enterprise relationships with the center despite the political pressure represented by socialist work movements was not just a result of the support given by economic planners. They depended above all on the enterprise-level trade-union organs, like the factory councils, which in 1959 were merged with the enterprise assemblies sponsored by the central unions—the *Revoluční odborové hnutí* (ROH).⁷⁸ In the organizational space between the apparatus of the unified trade union and the labor process stood a large number of enterprise-based trade union functionaries; in the period between 1954 and 1964 in industry there was approximately one union officeholder for every three to four workers.⁷⁹ It was these people who translated the directives that governed the work movements into reality on the factory floor.

Against the background of the situation on the eve of the Communist

seizure of power, it was hardly surprising that the mobilization of the working class in the service of the first five-year plan rested in part on terror. Between 1948 and 1953 workers represented between twenty-five and thirty percent of all victims of political repression, of either a judicial or an extrajudicial nature.⁸⁰ Repression was ever present in all aspects of everyday life, and socialist competition was no exception. "We know you, you are an old grumbler, and such people end up locked up," the experienced foundry-man Kuvaj was told, when during one competition he criticized the use of Soviet methods to load one blast furnace.⁸¹

Terror was also a reaction to the permanent, predominant, and socially-rooted industrial unrest that was especially marked during the first five-year plan. This took the form of work stoppages, protests, solidarity actions, boycotts of shift-work, resistance to increases in work norms, localized unrest, and the strike wave of early June 1953. On the other hand, state socialist governance was sufficiently flexible to keep these "deviant" social bargaining contexts relatively free of political and ideological sanctions and from the pressure towards conformity. It was able to channel discontent by making concessions to demands for participation that came from the factory councils. The actions that underpinned this were: first, a pruning of the influence of the KSC's factory cells; second, the introduction of a disciplinary system of enterprise-level sub-justice under the supervision of the factory councils; and, third, greater democracy in elections to factory councils.⁸²

As early as the beginning of the 1950s the factory councils were local institutions that were able to resist successfully the attempts of centralized policies to destroy them.⁸³ The strength that the councils managed to win for themselves was due to their very particular "march through the system." Despite criticism from the Central Council of Trade Unions, they acquired a mediating role in production by respecting official understandings of the unified trade union organization. They converted themselves into agents for securing scarce raw materials for their enterprises.⁸⁴ Eight years after the Communist seizure of power it was already clear that the enterprise-level trade-union organizations assumed management responsibilities⁸⁵ and their authority among workers depended on how successful they were in mobilizing resources for production.⁸⁶ The leaderships of factory councils were particularly active; they accompanied the director on business trips, chaired talks with suppliers, and applied pressure in the ministries.⁸⁷ The president of the Rudý Letov Aeroplane Plant factory council, Chmelíček, went to Kladno in search of material for production, acquired wardrobes for new workers, held talks over the deliveries of materials, and travelled to Moravia, in order to ascertain "the competence of enterprise management" there.⁸⁸ In the Rýnovice automobile plant "production problems" were solved "without the participation of management," according to one trade union report from October 1952.⁸⁹ "The union functionaries in the enterprises have a clear mastery of economic problems, some speak like trained economists" wrote a member of the trade unions' central council after a tour of inspections in Moravian industrial enterprises during summer 1956.⁹⁰

The consequences of such activity were real gains of both position and prestige within enterprises. Comrade Kuncek, President of the factory council of the Tatra Wagon Plant in Prague-Butovice, was identified as the key person to represent the enterprise in discussions with the ministry; so unrestricted was the scope of his remit he could not be corrected by the director.⁹¹ The common assumptions about secondary structures of power in state socialist societies are not fully borne out here, given that these relationships cannot be simple reduced to informal compensatory mechanisms, but took more formal shape in economic negotiation. The standing of the factory councils was high in this regard, and they played a similar role in relation to socialist work movements.

Socialist Competition and Work Norms

Statistics about socialist competitions are not especially revealing. Internal correspondence between trade-union functionaries made this clear; of 12,000 miners who were said to be participating in competition in early 1949, around 4,000 did so only on paper.⁹² The party leadership was aware that often almost no one in the enterprises knew how many workers engaged in competition.⁹³ Some workers only realized after the event that they had been nominated as shock-workers.⁹⁴ Falsified statistics, it seems, were often used as a means of papering over the actual, “flexible” operation of competition at the local level.⁹⁵ Manufactured evidence could clearly be revealed as such, especially when, as with the competition for the banner of the Korean Peoples’ Republic in 1954, a special material reward was offered for the victor.⁹⁶

Despite all these qualifications one can at the very least gain a crude picture from the statistics, which give a general indication of the actual percentages of employees who participated in competition across fourteen sectors of the economy in September 1950:⁹⁷

TABLE ONE Percentage of Workers Participating in Socialist Competition
by Industrial Sector, 1950

Industrial sector	Percentage	Industrial sector	Percentage
Heavy Machine Manufacture	67.5	Chemicals	51.9
Precision Machine Manufacture	67.0	Textiles	50.8
Leather/Rubber	64.0	Energy	50.4
Motor Vehicles/Aircraft	58.8	Wood	46.5
Light Metal	58.8	Mining	45.3
Paper	57.1	Ceramics	43.9
Steel Production	55.8	Glass	40.5

One can take these figures to mean, leaving aside the qualifications outlined above, that the different percentages who participated in competition were determined by differential pressure on sectors that depended on the importance that was given to them by the regime.⁹⁸ Heavy machine manufacture, a pillar of the “iron road” to the building of socialism, sat at the top of the league table of competition, while the wood industry lay far behind. The placing of other sectors does not conform so easily to this model, as the placing of the leather and paper industries shows. A better explanation seems to lie in the link between socialist competition and the problem of work norms.

Competition was supposed to uncover the potential for improvement in work organization or in the technical conditions of production that would make new work norms possible. “We join a new competition, and within three months the plan target is raised again and our work norms are tightened,” complained Miklošík, a worker in the Vítkovice Iron Works.⁹⁹ This brought “generalized” distrust of socialist competition, which was marked among workers at Škoda in 1957.¹⁰⁰ As far as many enterprise directors were concerned it was simply socially and politically unacceptable for increases in work norms and the consequent reductions in wages to be implemented as a result of competition,¹⁰¹ and for this reason practice was uneven. Those who wished to bring the norms into line with improvements in the organization of production had to reckon with a range of additional problems. A move to reduce the piece-rate following “an examination of the norms” in the Prague Diesel Engine Plant in early 1953 resulted in a go-slow that cut plan fulfilment from 103 to 80 percent and an increase in absenteeism. Simultaneously a section of the workforce increased their work rate in order to earn exactly as much as they had before the wage cut, but at the cost of considerable increase in the production of scrap.¹⁰²

Insecurity over the likely consequences of competition was felt mostly by those working according to “soft” norms, which even after several increases, could be easily overfulfilled, thus allowing workers to earn relatively large sums. Thousands of work norms could be fulfilled by between 200 and 300 percent in the large machine factories, according to the trade union leadership in 1955. It was an “enormous task” for union functionaries and the enterprises to clear up these “anomalies.”¹⁰³ The proportion of norms that were “technically established” was still very low in the mid-1950s; only eighteen percent of norms fell into this category in the Prague district.¹⁰⁴ The reason for this was the high proportion of “craft work,” which stood at sixty-five percent in machine manufacture in 1960;¹⁰⁵ this was defined as work of less intensity than “machine work” for the purpose of setting norms. Eighty percent of all norms for “machine work” were “technically established” in Plzeň’s Škoda Works at the beginning of the 1960s; this was true of only forty percent of norms for “craft work” on the assembly lines. Management estimated that most norms here were “soft.”¹⁰⁶ The vocal resistance of workers to attempts to reclassify their “craft work” tasks as “machine work,”¹⁰⁷ supported by popular attitudes which saw the introduction of new technology as part of “an attack on wages,”¹⁰⁸ resulted in an 18.7 percent decrease in the number of “machine” workers, and a six percent rise in the num-

ber of “craft” workers between 1960 and 1968.¹⁰⁹ The management blamed their lack of control,¹¹⁰ but it tended to have as much to do with the promotion of workers, who shared the mentality of the shop floor, to supervisory positions, as it did with the fact that enterprise union organizations effectively governed work organization.¹¹¹

Socialist competition was consequently treated as dependent on the problems of the norms and subordinate to a social logic that related to a dynamic of the restriction of effort and overexertion on the part of the worker. This appeared legitimate for as long as the uncertainty of production led to work stoppages that were either effectively unpaid,¹¹² or remunerated at very low rates of pay.¹¹³ As a result of this work movements were ensnared in a trap created by the interplay of different material issues. This was underlined by the findings of an opinion poll conducted in 1949, in which between seventy and eighty percent of shock-workers gave better earnings and other material benefits as their reasons for joining competition.¹¹⁴

On the Political and Social Resonance of Socialist Competition

When senior trade-union functionaries complained of the difficulties in raising the political consciousness of the workers,¹¹⁵ they discovered that this was not affected by the worker carrying a party card. As a mass party which contained around a third of the 1.5 million workers in the country by the middle of the 1950s,¹¹⁶ the KSĊ was unable to organize its own ranks to participate in mobilization on the “work front.” Around thirty percent of its members could be regarded as “active;” they had to simply “cart along” the overwhelming majority.¹¹⁷ At the end of 1949 only half of the workers organized in the Communist factory-level cells in forty-three enterprises, with a total of 70,000 employees, participated in socialist competition.¹¹⁸ In the discussions of “Communist Saturdays” there were examples of party members who would refuse to participate even when they vowed to protect the socialist regime at the same time. One miner who belonged to the peoples’ militia declared at an enterprise assembly in the General Svoboda mine in Ostrava in June 1951 that he would defend the peoples’ democracy “with a shotgun in my hand,” but would not work “on a free Saturday.”¹¹⁹ A reverse situation could also occur. Koutný, a worker in a southern Bohemian paper factory who overfulfilled his norm and had been rewarded as a technical innovator, refused to join the party; he had a small plot of land which occupied all of his free time.¹²⁰

Some sources show that work movements appealed to workers with low qualifications or who belonged to groups at the bottom of hierarchies of occupational prestige. They saw these as evidence that under socialism, for the first time, their work was valued, and thus invested in work movements for reasons of symbolic recognition. In the Prague sewers the workers took to socialist competition and reported, taking pride in their role in social policy, on their success in improving hygiene in the capital city.¹²¹ The worker Houfová, who had been elected the best worker in the canteen of one machine factory, was grateful that

in 1948 her occupation was regarded as “worthy,”¹²² while the pig-feeder Poďařilová, who had been rewarded for “good work” by being sent to the Second Congress of the Defenders of Peace in 1953, proclaimed that the time had passed when people were not recognized for their work.¹²³ Slovak construction workers, who generally came from socially marginalized groups in rural areas and maintained strong ties to agriculture, “were so deeply moved that they cried” when they were named the best workers of their enterprise.¹²⁴

While the preferential treatment given to marginalized groups within the workforce in wage policy ensured their loyalty to the state and the party,¹²⁵ they hardly touched the established hierarchies of power within the working class itself. The traditional pecking order determined participation in work on night shifts, boycotted by those workers at the top,¹²⁶ which were staffed instead by the unskilled, who made up ninety percent of the night-shift workers in the Škoda Works.¹²⁷ Furthermore, work movements, as long as they enjoyed political support, could act as an informal means by which the social position of certain groups was improved. There is little doubt, for example, that a considerable number of women workers sought to mitigate their marginal positions in the workplace by engaging with the work movements. One cannot fully bear this out statistically, but the evidence points clearly in this direction.¹²⁸ The organizers of increases in work norms often started their campaigns by mobilizing women, with the hope that the men would not want to be left behind, and at least would be “dragged along” behind them.¹²⁹ The conflict between women workers enthusiastic about competition, frequently indifferent factory councils, and uninterested managers was often taken beyond the enterprise and had to be settled by higher trade-union organs.¹³⁰ This shows that their engagement was more than simply the formal one assigned to them by state propaganda. They were enthusiastic participants in official celebrations in honor of the best working woman of an enterprise, or in the presentation of shock-work diaries. One female shock-worker in the Sfinx Enamel Works in České Budějovice publicly took against the factory council, after they placed her certificate of merit in a modest frame. This matter, after it could not be settled within the enterprise, was finally brought before the central committee of the Metalworkers’ Union in Prague.¹³¹

Symbolic appeals had little effect on those who wished to be remunerated in line with their participation in work movements. “If we just get a badge and no cash or stuff for clothes, then nothing will come of it,” miners in the Moravian Jeremenko and Petr Bezruč pits commented on the announcement of one socialist competition.¹³² Those named as the best workers in the Škoda Works in 1952 received the sum of 5,000 crowns together with a badge depicting Stalin.¹³³

As early as the middle of the 1950s the ceremonies that surrounded competitions and the production process had all but disappeared. None of three choirs in Jiří Pit in the northwestern Bohemian coal fields participated in the celebration of the completion of the first five-year plan in January 1953. Furthermore, no manager turned up to give the required speech.¹³⁴ There was deep-seated weariness in the ministerial bureaucracy with the ritual imposition of

obligations on employees through socialist competition. When a delegation of railway men from Žilina arrived after a long journey to Prague in early 1953 in order to give the Railways' Minister an account of competition, no one waited for them.¹³⁵ During 1953 and 1954 the regular agenda item of many factory councils that related to "cultural activity" among the workers disappeared. This had emphasized the value and meaning of labor, embodied in texts like the poem "Work in a Cement Factory" by the worker Janota, initially read in a meeting of the trade union organization in a cement factory in Králův Dvůr in autumn 1950.¹³⁶

Upward mobility within enterprises based upon individual performance in socialist competition was a common phenomenon until 1952. It is difficult to say whether this can be connected to the symbolic values that were attached to work movements and to socialist labor. Alongside recognition on the official, political level, success in work movements was connected to certain forms of symbolic cultural recognition. When production targets were smashed through exceptional work and products were completed, the enterprise choir would appear and then rewards would be announced.¹³⁷ "We'll start up the music, just as soon as you've finished the seventh turbine," stated one trade union functionary, in connection with a socialist competition in the first machine hall of the Škoda works, designed to make up time after initial difficulties in the production of a number of turbines.¹³⁸

Work Movements and the Culture of Production

Public discourse in socialist societies always placed considerable weight on stability, something which left little room for the public settlement of conflicts of values fuelled by nonconformist practices. Deviance from official norms had to be negotiated in clandestine ways.¹³⁹ Enterprises had little room for maneuver to criticize socialist work movements, or to balance their introduction against other considerations including the likely practical consequences. One point where this occurred was in measures that dealt with the high work intensity that competitions brought in train, where the primacy of quantitative production levels was asserted over the goal of maintaining the quality of goods produced.¹⁴⁰ An example of this is provided the Svit enterprise factory council in February 1953, which laid down thirteen goals for the competition in order of priority. The second priority was the fulfillment of the quantitative production plan, while the quality of production was given ninth place.¹⁴¹ The enshrining of an ideology of "quantity" tended to encourage the production of waste, while the competition statute introduced by the Central Council of Trade Unions in 1951, which on the one hand justified competitions as a means of cutting production times,¹⁴² effectively gave this trade-off its blessing.

Only a year before, in February 1950, the factory council of the Škoda Works had reprimanded its shock-workers, as "one half" of their output "was scrap."¹⁴³ Mere criticism was not the end of the matter. A year after the shock-workers had received their warning, the shock-worker Čermák, despite having

being decorated and sent to several international events, was struck off the list of candidates for the factory council elections. This happened to other leading figures in socialist work movements in the Škoda Works who had been rewarded for their achievements by trade-union and party organs.¹⁴⁴

There was a more serious clash of values in coalmining, where mistakes and poor work performance had especially serious consequences. Coalmining suffered from serious problems in the 1950s created by a combination of unrealistic plan targets, relative labor shortage, poor maintenance, the neglect of safety, and bitter conflict between miners and management at the coalface.¹⁴⁵ Shock-work fuelled these conflicts. In the Stakhanov Pit in Ostrava one face worker, decorated with the “order of labor,” decided that the construction of pit props was an unnecessary obstacle to production, with the consequence that his work group had the highest accident rate in the entire mine.¹⁴⁶ Acts of sabotage were the most predominant form of resistance to such measures, for example the frequent deliberate cutting of tubes carrying compressed air to drilling chambers.¹⁴⁷

Many of these conflicts had their roots in the immediate postwar years, but were quickly carried over into the Communist era. When the Central Council of Trade Unions surveyed 1,200 employees of one Bohemian engineering works on their attitudes to Stakhanovism in summer 1947, almost seventy percent expressed hostile attitudes, arguing that the introduction of Stakhanovite methods would undermine the quality of their work.¹⁴⁸ In coal mining, where what the trade unions condemned as “the conservatism of the miners” threw countless obstacles in the way of the implementation of socialist work movements, the real obstacles stemmed from a work culture shaped by the distinctive conditions and patterns of mine work. It also related to the fact that few wanted to interrupt the flow of informal knowledge that occurred between different generations in the pits.¹⁴⁹ “Every miner places great weight on his own dexterity and is not very keen to be advised by anyone,” commented one engineer on his futile attempt to appoint shock-workers as “instructors” to advise others on the shift of “new work methods.”¹⁵⁰ “Older” workers refused to concede the right of those who accepted the new productivist regime to define themselves as skilled workers. When the Soviet Stakhanovite Bykov came to Czechoslovakia to visit the leading metal turner Svoboda, who had been decorated as a shock-worker, “older” workers were prepared to tell their Soviet visitor that Svoboda was no turner.¹⁵¹ Across all sectors the roles of masters and foremen were crucial, even where their formal position within enterprises was weak, in giving tacit support to submerged resistance to work movements, often backed by the engineers.¹⁵²

Unskilled and “new” workers, often recruited from the rural periphery, were the earliest targets of those who agitated to spread socialist competition in many factories.¹⁵³ On the other hand it is clear, despite unreliable statistics, that skilled workers formed the rank-and-file of the shock-workers, and that from their ranks came many of the pioneers of the socialist work movements.¹⁵⁴ Work movements had to depend on and thus fail on the basis of the mobilization of experience, the organization of labor, and expectations of the quality of pro-

duction, factors that drove their gradual loss of political currency. One of the major problems that they faced was that most work movements and the methods they used were imported directly from the Soviet Union, and thus derived from an environment where rationalization was less advanced and production not as mechanized. “Why should we learn from Soviet engineers, when we are more developed?” the locksmith Šašek asked a colleague in the electrical workshop of Škoda.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, at least as far as the Škoda KSČ organization were concerned, the opinion that “the knowledge of our engineers is so much better” (than the Soviet—P.H.) had spread to such an extent that it had become unnecessary to publish an annual almanac of Soviet work methods.¹⁵⁶

Work Movements and Egalitarian Opposition

The impact of socialist competition was blunted when it clashed with the values of a workforce infused by the principle of an egalitarian distribution of reward, as opposed to the ethic of differentiation through individual performance advanced by the state. The workers tended consequently to work “around” socialist competition, subordinating it to their own notions of justice. Until 1953 in one Škoda branch plant in the Prague suburb of Smíchov the best worker in a competition was announced in a ceremony, in which the title was awarded not to one, but to every worker, and they were rewarded with a common premium payment.¹⁵⁷ Foundry workers in Kunčice demanded that they should take turns to be declared winners of the socialist competition.¹⁵⁸ In the ČKD Stalingrad machine plant collective pressure for the equal treatment of all was so considerable that shock-workers were placed together with “normal” workers in common groups, and supplementary incomes were shared equally between them.¹⁵⁹ In the Tvržice Water Works all were treated as the best workers, a principle that was applied to the distribution of their wages.¹⁶⁰ The milieu of the shop floor was one where conformity to these values could be enforced. When the Soviet Stakhanov Bykov visited the turner Svoboda in Prague’s Dimitrov works in early 1951, he was astonished that, in complete contrast to Soviet practice, Svoboda’s workplace was not decorated. An embarrassed management had to find some propaganda posters in order to rescue the situation and decorate his workplace.¹⁶¹ In April 1956 the worker Javorský asked whether the hanging of photographs of “leading workers” in the enterprise was an example of the “cult-of-personality” referred to by Khrushchev in his “secret speech.”¹⁶²

These examples do not illustrate accidental attempts to avoid work movements. The beginning of the distribution of identity books to shock-workers in July 1949 was tied to a policy of differential distribution of ration cards, at a time when material shortage was a fact of life. Shock-workers were given preferential treatment and the right to visit shops where the goods were reserved for them.¹⁶³ The factory councils worked to broaden access to these privileges by relaxing the criteria for becoming a shock-worker and responding to demands for equal treatment. Ration cards were freely distributed both to shock workers and to non-shock workers alike.¹⁶⁴ The number of shock-workers’ identity cards

issued increased dramatically from 28,000 in February 1950 to 344,000 by that November. This placed the supply of food and goods to the population in danger, forcing the party leadership to halt the issue of new identity papers in March 1951.¹⁶⁵ Prior to this decision some enterprises had already begun to disassociate themselves from the political and material appeasement of shock-workers, especially when the increases in production norms in autumn 1950 reduced shock-workers' wages considerably. "It seems to us," argued the authors of one report into the revision of norms in Plzeň's Škoda Works in November 1950, "that most of our shock-workers are actually not shock-workers at all, they are just called shock-workers because they happen to work according to "lax" norms."¹⁶⁶

The egalitarian current within the working class and its institutional expression through the factory councils was a continuous phenomenon both before and after 1968. Though it drew on continuities in working-class culture inherited from the First Republic, it was system-specific, and tightly tied to Communist rule. Under the pressure of this egalitarianism the reduction in wage differentials prior to 1948 had gone much further than in Poland, Hungary, or the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁷ This narrow wage spread did not change much over the following two decades, as the table showing the distribution of earnings over four wage groups in 1964 demonstrates.¹⁶⁸ When economic reformers in the mid-1960s proposed greater wage differentiation, this provoked instant opposition in workplaces; for the manufacturers of musical instruments in Malšov it was a sign that the authorities were "attacking the workers."¹⁶⁹

The KSČ embraced the policy of leveled wages by the mid-1950s at the latest.¹⁷⁰ Prior to that the trade unions had attacked the "unhealthy, petty-bourgeois leveling tendencies" of wage policy,¹⁷¹ though they were utterly powerless to prevent informal compromises between the wage departments of factory councils and the wage departments of the enterprises over issues like the social wage and aspects of remuneration such as premiums, supplements, and overtime which were subject to only minimal bureaucratic control.¹⁷² These could be used to level wage differences between different categories of workers and between workers and engineers or workers and administrative personnel.¹⁷³ The rela-

TABLE TWO Wage Spread in Industry, Mining and Construction across all Employees, and Men and Women, 1964

Net monthly earnings (Crowns)	Percentage of all employees (%)	Percentage of men (%)	Percentage of women (%)
-800	3.1	0.8	6.7
801-2000	80.2	72.2	91.9
2001-3500	16.3	26.1	1.4
3501-5000	0.4	0.9	0

tively narrow wage spread, as in other socialist countries, tended to reinforce the strong position of workers within the enterprises,¹⁷⁴ which in turn buttressed their countervailing power in the face of work movements.

Egalitarian values had been articulated in 1945 as a plank of political aspirations to “remove social injustices, which have been most starkly felt by the socially-weak workers.”¹⁷⁵ Though this was not merely a source of passive strength, its ability to provide a basis for collective action was nevertheless restricted. As a result of the criminalization of workplace struggles relatively few strikes broke out during the late 1940s and early 1950s involving all employees. Likewise the country-wide disorder that followed the implementation of currency reform on May 30, 1953 led to the intensified involvement of state security agencies in curtailing protest within enterprises.¹⁷⁶ Despite this egalitarian “imagined community” of workers, their ability to bargain collectively was weakened by the pursuit of individual struggles for social betterment which provoked continual conflict. Official wage policy, which proclaimed the goal of equal pay or equal work at least within individual industrial sectors, instead generated complaints, envy, squabbling, and sporadic strike action. Work at forges was better paid in Vítkovice than in Plzeň, trouser hangers in the Topolčany textile plants were worse paid than in Trenčín, miners in Sokolov got less for working in the same conditions than their equivalents in Most, workers in a wood-working plant in Třebíč were jealous of their colleagues in Jihlava, while the wages for transporting coal in Vrchlabí differed from enterprise to enterprise.¹⁷⁷

The power of egalitarianism was most marked in conflict with those from outside the imagined community of workers; it was directed against those who served the higher organs of the union or the party within the enterprise, and operated through a solidarity that was enforced against attacks from the state security services or the party or trade-union apparatus. Among those who also came into conflict with workers were the so-called worker correspondents of the factory-level press, who reported on “wrongdoing” in the enterprises, and were consequently both ostracized by management and the workers.¹⁷⁸ Another example was the last major attempt by the party and trade unions in 1961 to grapple with the problem of work discipline by setting up “Peoples’ Courts” in the factories, an attempt which foundered on the unwillingness of workers to denounce their workmates.¹⁷⁹

The reorganization of the labor process through the introduction of centralized planning interacted with institutions like socialist work movements to restructure the workforces in the enterprises. The role of the brigade leader in mining was to act as a “revolutionary,” not only spreading new work methods¹⁸⁰ but also to remake and subvert the culture of the face workers.¹⁸¹ A similar motive lay behind the introduction of the three-shift system. The authorities hoped in factories like the Bílá Cerkev ironworks that they could “smoke out” the “poorer” workers who were being protected as a consequence of the “false solidarity” of their “better” colleagues.¹⁸² The “brigades of socialist labor” introduced in 1959 aimed, with the agreement of the party, to transcend the “normal” forms of work organization.¹⁸³ Yet the party supported socialist competition

campaigns, especially when they were seen to help undermine social relations underpinned by “social considerations,” “comradeship,” and “solidarity.”¹⁸⁴

These measures foundered socially in that they generated diffuse resistance that bolstered the “structural conservatism” of socialist system. This process should not just be understood as the consequence of the weakness of the Communist party in attempting to restructure society, nor was it the product of the “natural” persistence of social continuities. It was also connected to bargaining strategies, which were motivated by the aim of preserving “traditional” patterns of hierarchical differentiation within the working class. These forms of resistance blunted the impact of Communist drives to transform the workplace and preserved preexisting hierarchies. While the authorities tried to use the three-shift system to restructure working-class culture, that culture was able to repel it. Skilled workers could be barely persuaded to work on the second, afternoon shift, and certainly not the third, night shift.¹⁸⁵ One trade union accepting this situation resigned itself to the fact that the second and third shifts would be filled with “unskilled” workers.¹⁸⁶

The social foundation of the dominant position of the skilled worker was the extensive employment policy pursued by the state after 1948 which aimed “at a growth in production through increasing the size of the workforce.”¹⁸⁷ Between 1948 and 1960 alone around half-a-million workers were recruited in industry; the overwhelming majority had few qualifications for and little experience in industrial work.¹⁸⁸ As part of informal settlements within the enterprises designed to aid plan fulfillment and to ameliorate the impact of the centralized regulation of wages, “key” skilled workers essential to plan fulfillment were allocated large numbers of new, unskilled recruits. One 1963 investigation into the use of labor in several departments in the Škoda Works found that a considerable amount of the work counting towards the norm fulfillment of many skilled workers was actually done by unskilled labor, enabling the skilled to easily fulfill their norm and gain high premium payments.¹⁸⁹ In coalmining it was common as early as the early 1950s to place inexperienced workers into small groups that would be deployed to help the skilled and experienced miners achieve higher earnings. In return they would be given a share of the norm-fulfillment of the skilled.¹⁹⁰ In the mines hierarchical lines of demarcation were rigidly observed. Skilled workers, who had come to the mines from industrial sectors in response to labor recruitment campaigns, were often not trained for coalmining and therefore were deployed as unskilled workers.¹⁹¹ The members of brigades were also subordinated to these rigid lines of demarcation; they had to give way to a dominant pattern of the distribution of work and earnings that favored “older,” experienced workers. Their protests to factory councils met with little sympathy.¹⁹²

Restratification also occurred by raising the status of the elite at the expense of other workers. This was especially marked with the expansion of the number of women in the workforce.¹⁹³ Because of the relatively privileged position of the skilled elite, it was hard to win their support for economic reforms in the 1960s, even when the industrial policy measures relied, as far as the party

was concerned, on the capacity to motivate skilled workers.¹⁹⁴ Thus, in conclusion, the informal settlements within Czechoslovak enterprises pushed paradoxically in two contradictory directions. On the one hand they assisted low-wage groups and reduced social inequalities, thereby weakening the efforts of the party and the unions to use wage differentials as a motivating force. But at the same time the settlements did not alter or undermine the traditional, elite position of the skilled worker. Paradoxically, while such settlements increased an enterprise's ability to integrate its workforce, they also gave workers more power to resist outside pressure.

NOTES

1. It is concerned with aspects of a research project dealing with the social history of the industrial working class in Czechoslovakia during the period between 1945 and 1968 that was financed by the Volkswagen Foundation and conducted under the auspices of the Collegium Carolinum. I wish to thank my coresearchers in this project (Eva Hošková, Květa Jechková, Lenka Kalinová, Karel Kaplan and Jiří Pokorný) for their engagement. They bear, however, no responsibility for any mistakes, which are, of course, my own.

2. For an examination of this question across Central and Eastern Europe, including the GDR, see Helga Schultz "Die sozialistische Industrialisierung—toter Hund oder Erkenntnis-mittel?" *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1999/2: 105–30.

3. Report on the Stalin Shift for the General Secretary of the Trade Unions, December 28, 1949, Box 117, Inventory No. 308, NHK, Všeodborový archiv, ČMKOS, Prague (hereafter cited as VOA).

4. Box 117, Inventory No. 308, NHK, VOA.

5. Comment of the Director of the Study and Planning Department of the Central Council of Cooperatives, *Ibid.*

6. Report on Competition in the Ostrava-Karviná District, March 30, 1948, in Box 96, Inventory No. 252/2, NHK, VOA.

7. This was done by the coalminer Gach, who managed to produce 2430 cubic meters of coal together with three helpers in one shift. Stakhanov himself had only managed, with his three helpers, to produce 1020 cubic meters per shift. Report on the Stakhanovite Movement in the Ostrava-Karviná District, "National Competition for the Reconstruction of the Republic" (November 1945), Box 22, Inventory No. 61, NHK, VOA.

8. Josef Provázník, Frantisek Vlasák, *Socialistické soutěžení* (Praha, 1960), 21–44; New Indication of the Competition among all Employees in Heavy Engineering on September 21, 1947, Box 1 a, 1947–1948, OS Kovo, VOA.

9. Alice Teichova, *The Czechoslovak Economy 1918–1980* (London, 1988), 120f.

10. Lubomír Vacek, "Vývoj názorů české populace na ekonomiku," *Acta oeconomica pragensis* 6/5 (1998) 177–199.

11 Report on the measures of the Central Economic Commission taken on the question of the organization and recruitment of long-lasting brigades, August 16, 1948, Box. 76, Inventory No. 207, NHK, VOA.

12. Brno District Council of Trade Unions to the Economic Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions, July 22, 1947, Box 71, Inventory No. 191a, NHK, VOA.

13. National Security Division of the Provisional National Committee in Prague to the Central Council of Trade Union, January 22, 1948. The papers carry dates going back to November 1947, Box 82, Inventory No. 218 (Mining 1948), NHK, VOA.

14. Minutes of the meeting of the Bohemian-Moravian Machine Manufacture Enterprise Factory Committee, Prague, June 4, 1946, Box 2, 30–44, ČKD-Ú, Státní oblastní archiv, Prague (hereafter cited as SOA).

15. Report of the Central Social Policy Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions on the Development of Social Policy in 1947, Box No. 29, Inventory No. 34/14a, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Lenka Kalinová, Václav Brabec, "K některým stránkám vývoje struktury a postavení čs. dělnické třídy v letech 1945–1948," in *Odbory a naše revoluce. Sborník studií* (Praha, 1968), 48–93.

18. See Speech of trade unionist Erban at the Conference of Functionaries of the District Councils of Trade Unions, Prague, March 29–30, 1946, Box 17., Inventory No. 25/7, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

19. National Security Division of the Provisional National Committee in Prague to the Central Council of Trade Union, January 22, 1948. Box 82, Inventory No. 218 (Mining 1948), NHK, VOA.

20. Minutes of a Meeting of Trade-Union Functionaries and Members of Prague Factory Committees, June 11, 1945, Box 3, Inventory No. 2/9/3, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

21. On the Regulations dealing with the Roles of Norm-Setter and Time-and-Motion Men, Box 7, Inventory No. 7/6d, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

22. National Security Division of the Provisional National Committee in Prague to the Central Council of Trade Union, January 22, 1948. Box 82, Inventory No. 218 (Mining 1948), NHK, VOA.

23. Peter Heumos, "Betriebsräte, Einheitsgewerkschaft und staatliche Unternehmensverwaltung. Anmerkungen zu einer Petition mährischer Arbeiter an die tschechoslowakische Regierung vom 8. Juni 1947," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 29 (1981): 215–245.

24. A Report about the Factory Committees, 1946, Box 7, Inventory No. 7/15c, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

25. An Excerpt from the Minutes of a meeting of the heads of District Trade Union Councils' in Brno, September 15, 1945, Box 1/1945, Inventory No. 1/A, KOR Brno, VOA.

26. Central Council of Trade Unions to the Ministry of Industry, September 20, 1945, Box 3, Inventory No. 2/8/16, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

27. Peter Heumos, "Die große Camouflage? Überlegungen zu Interpretationsmustern der kommunistischen Machtübernahme in der Tschechoslowakei im Februar 1948," in *Kommunismus und Osteuropa. Konzepte, Perspektiven und Interpretationen im Wandel*, ed. Eva Schmidt-Hartmann (München, 1994), 221–241.

28. Minutes of the Founding Meeting of the Revolutionary Factory Committee of the Škoda Plant in Plzeň, May 10, 1945. Plzeň 503, 45 A, Škoda Archiv.

29. For the decree see *Vznik Revolučního odborového hnutí. Sborník dokumentů z let 1944–1946* (Praha, 1977), 131–143.

30. Heumos, "Betriebsräte, Einheitsgewerkschaft und staatliche Unternehmensverwaltung."

31. On the Regulations dealing with the Roles of Norm-Setter and Time-and-Motion Men, Box 7, Inventory No. 7/6d, ÚRO-Soc., VOA.

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